

October 4th, 2004

Leadership (Memo)

C. William Pollard

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Confidential

October 4, 2004

To: Mike Volkema

From: Bill Pollard

Mike, I hope the following thoughts about the leadership role you are now playing may be helpful to you. As you know, I was in the same position you are in and I experienced some of the same feelings and emotions.

1. I encourage you to have an office separate and apart from Brian.
2. Set a time frame for turning over your responsibilities with respect to Project Blue.
3. Your best support and help for Brian will come in one-to-one reviews with him, not in your direct interface with the organization.
4. I was five years in the job of Chairman after my initial CEO assignment. In retrospect, it was too long. I don't know what the right timing will be for you but I do know now you are needed in this role.
5. Mike, you did a remarkable job in leading Herman Miller as CEO. You picked up the responsibility during a very difficult transition and much confusion. You brought focus and direction to the company, achieving overall successful growth, development of people, and efficient use and stewardship of assets. You then were confronted with a precipitous change in the marketplace with a resulting substantial reduction in revenue, requiring significant downsizing and restructuring, yet maintaining the overall morale and spirit of the firm. Not many CEOs have been through what you have been through and then had the opportunity to turn over the reins to your selected successor at a time when there was growing momentum. Have you thought about writing about what you have learned, including how you have integrated your faith with your work?

6. Your work as leader and our work as a board, at this point, is to do everything we can to make Brian successful. He is starting off well but only time will tell whether he can, with the confidence of all, do the job. One of the most important tasks for Brian to do now is to set the expectations for the near term future and then meet and beat them. Guide and help him to stretch and at the same time be realistic in this area.

If you want to talk about any of these thoughts, just let me know. Thanks again, Mike, for your friendship and leadership. I am enclosing a copy of Drucker's brief comments on leadership which, with all the books written on the subject, I think captures the essence of what leadership is all about.

enclosure

following reply from Mike:

October 15, 2004

Email to Mike Volkema:

Thanks for your note. In the long run, I think you will find the proximity of office to be a problem but if the "message of partnership" is important now, I would go along with Brian's request and then in the future if you see problems developing, spend less and less time "in the office" and do your work at home or other places with phone and computer connection.

It was my experience that as I increasingly eliminated my presence, there was less and less opportunity for people to come to me and comment on how things "used to be" and I also could gradually remove the "shadow" of my leadership. It is important that the organization sees Brian as the one in charge and the one ultimately responsible.

Writing was a difficult task for me but there is an opportunity to lead with the pen. Look at the example of C. S. Lewis who has led through written expression of his thoughts and experiences even though he never had the title of a leader. You may think you are not at the level of C. S. Lewis but you are a very thoughtful person and you have something to say that will benefit others.

Mike, I enjoy the opportunity of continuing to work with you and I think there is still room for both of us to learn from each other and God knows the way of the future.

Bill